

## The Stone Fleet

Herman Melville *From 'Poems from Battle Pieces'*

I have a feeling for those ships,  
Each worn and ancient one,  
With great bluff bows, and broad in the bearm:  
Ay, it was unkindly done.  
But so they serve the Obsolete--  
Even so, Stone Fleet!

You'll say I'm doting; do but think  
I scudded round the Horn in one--  
The Tenedos, a glorious  
Good old craft as ever run--  
Sunk (how all unmeet!)  
With the Old Stone Fleet.

An India ship of fame was she,  
Spices and shawls and fans she bore;  
A whaler when her wrinkles came--  
Turned off! till, spent and poor,  
Her bones were sold (escheat)!  
Ah! Stone Fleet.

Four were erst patrician keels  
(Names attest what families be),  
The Kensington, and Richmond too,  
Leonidas, and Lee:  
But now they have their seat  
With the Old Stone Fleet.

To scuttle them-a pirate deed--  
Sack them, and dismast;  
They sunk so slow, they died so hard,  
But gurgling dropped at last.  
Their ghosts in gales repeat  
Woe's us. Stone Fleet!

And all for naught. The waters pass--  
Currents will have their way;  
Nature is nobody's ally; 'tis well;  
The harbor is bettered-will stay.  
A failure, and complete,  
Was your Old Stone Fleet.

An Old Sailor's Lament  
December, 1861